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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this guide is to introduce the Child Development Associate (CDA) program, a national effort to train, assess, and grant a professional credential to people who work with young children. This program is designed to fill the need for trained staff in Head Start, day care, nursery schools, and preschool programs. The six CDA competency areas include: (1) creating a safe and healthy learning environment; (2) advancing children's physical and intellectual abilities; (3) developing a child's positive self-image; (4) building a healthy group environment; (5) coordinating home and center experience; and (6) carrying out supplementary responsibilities. Specific competencies in each of these areas are also listed. The common characteristics of various CDA training programs are described: (1) training in the six competency areas; (2) integration of academic and field experiences; (3) individualized training; (4) flexible scheduling; (5) college accredited coursework in most programs; and (6) ongoing assessment. Basic features of the formal procedure for credentialing are outlined. Questions and answers concerning the trainee's role, time required, costs, career opportunities, and training availability are included. (ED)

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BECOMING A CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE

A Guide for Trainees

PS 007 943

U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
Office of Human Development
Office of Child Development
1975

The purpose of this guide is to introduce the CDA concept to people who are involved in CDA training programs, or might want to be. It was written by Fran Litman, Director of the Wheelock College Head Start Supplementary Training/CDA Program, and Rita Weathersby, an educational consultant. Sally Aber, Rosa Haynes, Diana Margalis, Theola Mitchell, Susan Olejars, and Lucille Rissler, all current CDA trainees, also contributed. Their statements are quoted throughout the text.

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Ages three to six . . .

Vital years in a child's development.
Learning to move with skill . . .

Each day making new discoveries, absorbing fundamental impressions and gaining knowledge of people and things.

. . . to know himself . . . and relate to others.

Parents, relatives, friends and teachers share the responsibility for guiding young children through these most important years of development.

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1. THE CDA PROGRAM

"It's very stimulating--you have to be willing to change, to do a little more work, invest extra time. But if anyone could live up to the CDA competencies this is what a person who works with children should be like."

Sally Aber and Diana Margalis.

A NATIONAL EFFORT

The CDA Program is a national effort to train, assess and grant a professional credential to people who are working with, or who want to work with, young children. It is sponsored by the Office of Child Development/Office of Human Development, of the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

The goal of the CDA Program is to meet a growing national need--the need for competent staff to work with young children in child care programs.

THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE

A Child Development Associate (CDA) is a person knowledgeable about young children and capable of taking direct responsibility for their daily activities in a developmental child care program.

CDA's work in any of a variety of settings--Head Start, day care, nursery schools and other preschool programs. CDA's are not aides. They are child care specialists who function as part of a professional team. Although they do not usually assume responsibility for overseeing the total program of a center, they assume direct responsibility for a group of children within the center.

Potential CDA's include people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some are currently employed in child care centers and others are men and women who want to enter the child care profession.

CDA training can be appropriate for members of a child care staff with several years' experience but little or no formal training, certified teachers who have worked with older children but who wish to gain the skills needed to work with preschoolers, parents or volunteers whose work in a preschool center has led them to pursue a career in early childhood education or child development, and many others--young or old--who want to develop competence in working with young children. Many current trainees work in Head Start child development centers and are receiving CDA training through the Head Start Supplementary Training Program.

MAIN FEATURES OF THE CDA PROGRAM

The CDA Competencies have been identified by a task force of specialists in child development and early childhood education, working in conjunction with the Office of Child Development.

CDA Training is directed toward achieving the CDA competencies.

The CDA Credential will be awarded to an individual who is able to demonstrate the CDA competencies defined by the CDA assessment process.

The CDA Consortium is a private nonprofit organization responsible for overseeing the development of ways to assess and credential CDA's.

A person involved in CDA training is called a CDA trainee, or intern. As this person acquires the CDA competencies—building on strengths and competencies already possessed—he or she becomes a candidate for the CDA credential, which is awarded following assessment by the CDA Consortium. Thus, the CDA Program offers an opportunity for professional growth that can result in something tangible—a CDA credential. College credit also accompanies CDA training.

The intention of the CDA Program is to thoroughly prepare individuals to work with young children in a way which promotes growth and development for children.

Before reading further, please refer to the glossary of terms in chapter 6 of this book. Many words have special meaning in the context of the CDA Program. The glossary explains them.

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2. THE SIX COMPETENCY AREAS

"You're learning how to work with children, how to interact with them and how to plan activities that help them learn and grow."

Lucille Rissler.

THE FOUNDATION FOR TRAINING

The CDA competencies are the foundation for CDA training programs. They represent a detailed definition of what a person who works with children should be able to do and be.

The competencies are divided into six major areas.

Mastering them requires knowledge about children and about activities appropriate in a pre-school center. Skill is also needed in interacting with children, with other staff, with parents and with other adults.

On the next few pages are brief descriptions of the competencies in each area. A complete listing of the CDA competencies is included in chapter 6 of this book.

Area A: Creating A Safe And Healthy Learning Environment.

The CDA creates a physical environment which is safe, appealing and understandable to children. He/she organizes space into functional areas (i.e., places to play with blocks, places to paint, a corner to look at books or do puzzles), and then maintains space and materials so that they are easily usable.

Area B: Advancing Children's Physical and Intellectual Abilities.

The CDA plans activities which encourage children to develop curiosity, solve problems, master tasks, and make independent choices. He/she supports children's desires to play and to express their thoughts and feelings. The CDA extends children's knowledge of how things work, of what plants and animals need to live, and of basic work processes necessary for everyday living. The CDA uses a variety of techniques to help children learn to understand and use language and numbers.

Area C: Developing A Child's Positive Self-Image.

The CDA provides an environment of acceptance and support for each child. He/she encourages initiative and responsibility, recognizes individual differences in children,

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responds to individual children's needs, uses a child's home language, and helps children deal realistically with emotional conflicts around such issues as trust, separation and rivalry. The CDA balances a child's tasks between experiences which bring mastery and success and those which are more challenging but do not lead to excessive distress or failure. His/her overall goal is to help each child feel good about himself/herself as a capable person and worthwhile member of the group.

Area D: Building A Healthy Group Environment.

The CDA creates a climate where children and adults can interact freely and constructively in the group setting. He/she establishes a reasonable system of limits and rules, plans activities so that children and adults can enjoy working and playing together, and fosters acceptance and appreciation of the group's variety of cultural backgrounds. The CDA creates an atmosphere where it is natural and acceptable for children and adults to express feelings, both positive and negative.

Area E: Coordinating Home And Center Experience.

The CDA communicates frequently with parents to understand their goals for their children, and to learn about the children's lives outside the center in the family setting. He/she thinks of each child as a member of his/her particular family, and works with the family to provide continuity between home and center settings and to resolve any disagreements about how children should behave or what should happen in the center. The CDA appreciates the cultural heritage of children's families, uses parents as resources, and plans classroom experiences that reflect and foster ethnic and cultural diversity.

Area F: Carrying Out Supplementary Responsibilities.

The CDA plans cooperatively with other staff members. He/she is able to record and share observations about each child's progress. The CDA is aware of management needs of the center, such as ordering supplies, scheduling staff time, and coordinating the activities of volunteers or parent participants.

OVERLAPPING COMPETENCIES

The competencies often overlap. Helping a child learn to work a puzzle can aid small muscle development and eye-hand coordination. It can help the child understand the concepts of spatial relationships and shape discrimination, and also give him a sense of accomplishment and a feeling of pride in his new ability. Although these fall under different competency areas, they are interrelated and can be accomplished together.

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A CDA'S PERSONAL CAPACITIES

Effective child care personnel also are:

sensitive to children's feelings,

ready to listen to children in order to understand their meanings,

emotionally responsive—taking pleasure in children's successes,

supportive during children's failures and troubles,

committed to building on the strengths of the child and his family,

able to adapt adult language and communication style to children's ways of understanding,

able to protect orderliness without sacrificing spontaneity or exuberance,

able to perceive individuality, and make positive use of individual differences within the group,

able to exercise control without being threatening,

able to employ humor and imagination.

Personal capacities are important because they influence the way the CDA uses the competencies in interacting with children. As this diagram shows, a CDA's personal capacities—although they are not part of formal training and assessment—are central to competence in each area.

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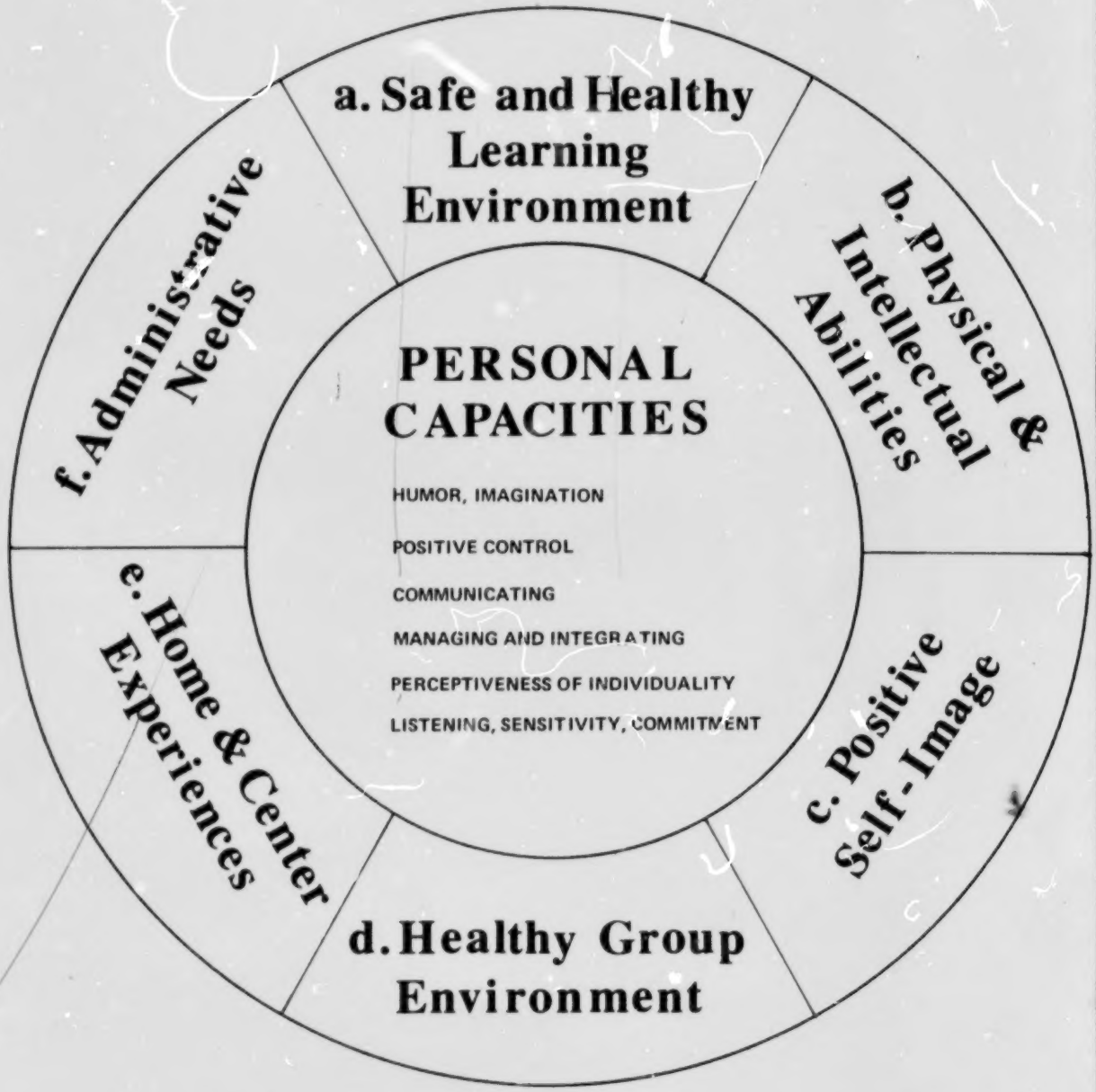
COMPETENCY AREAS & PERSONAL CAPACITIES



3. THE CDA TRAINING PROGRAM

"CDA training is more individualized. I'm getting exposed to new ideas and values and techniques. I like on-site supervision, especially talking with the CDA trainer and discussing ways of doing things that are new to me."

Diana Margalis.

COMPETENCY BASED TRAINING

CDA training is designed to identify which competencies a trainee already possesses and to enable a trainee to acquire all of the competencies over a period of time. A CDA trainee first determines his/her strengths and weaknesses in demonstrating the CDA competencies, and then works to add needed skills and knowledge.

Training is organized in a variety of ways. The ideal is to individualize the training experiences as much as possible and to make the length of time a person spends in the training program depend on what he/she knows and can do with children in assuming responsibility for their activities.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF TRAINING PROGRAMS

Although programs providing CDA training may be organized differently, they all share common characteristics.

Training is based on the six competency areas. Each aspect of training relates to becoming competent in some or all of the CDA competencies.

CDA training is concerned with what individuals need to be able to do with children and know about their growth and development. It is not a matter of completing a series of required courses.

Training is organized so that academic and field experiences are integrated.

Academic work and field experiences are both built around the CDA competencies. Academic experiences are not necessarily formal courses, but can be seminars, workshops, mini-courses, learning modules, independent projects, and sometimes correspondence courses.

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For example, someone working on the competency of "Helping children work gradually toward recognition of the symbols for designating words and numbers" could be involved in a mini-course on children's intellectual development while at the same time using materials in the classroom which teach children related skills.

At least half of the training experiences take place in the child care centers.

CDA trainees often continue to work in child care programs, or are helped by the training program to find a field placement to gain practical experience. On the job a CDA trainer helps the trainee focus on his/her role in the classroom, and on how to develop skills and knowledge for increased effectiveness.

On-site supervision and field training may involve:

exchange of ideas with co-workers and the CDA trainer;

participation in demonstration classes or workshops on curriculum and teaching methods;

observation by the trainer, followed by a conference to discuss what happened with the children, and why;

reports recording information about the children's behavior and trainee's responses;

analysis of case studies of children;

visits to other child care settings;

exchange of jobs with other trainees for several days or for a longer period of time;

video tapes of a trainee working with children, then playbacks for analysis;

independent projects such as establishing a new science area or developing a parent program.

Training is individualized and based on each trainee's strengths and weaknesses in relation to the CDA competencies.

Each trainee brings to the CDA training his/her own unique style, experience, interests and goals. Training programs respect those differences and try to arrange the program to meet individuals' needs.

At the beginning, trainees make an initial evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the CDA competencies with their CDA trainers. Then they develop an individual plan that specifies what competencies the trainee will work on.

For example, someone who is strong in competency Area C, Building a Child's Positive Self-Image, might need to acquire more knowledge and skill in competency Area B, Advancing Children's Physical and Intellectual Competence. The plan might include a

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short course or module on children's language development. On-the-job, the trainee might observe and record the way children use language. Then the trainee might develop an independent project on story telling and children's literature.

Plans of study are individualized in a variety of ways. Learning activities can be arranged in a sequence that someone moves through independently according to his/her own needs and interests. Trainees can work with other trainees in small groups, or in modules or mini-courses designed to provide knowledge related to a particular competency. Trainees might choose individually which competency area to work on and, with the CDA trainer, select learning experiences that will contribute to competence in that area.

Training is flexibly scheduled. The length of training depends on how long it takes an individual to acquire and demonstrate mastery of the CDA competencies.

Some factors which influence the amount of training time are:

amount of previous training;

current knowledge of early childhood education and child development;

competencies acquired through experience;

attitude toward and understanding of young children;

aptitude in acquiring skill and competence in working with children;

amount of time devoted to training, and the particular design of the training program.

College credit usually accompanies CDA training.

Whenever possible, valid college credit accompanies CDA training. The amount of credit and how it is granted varies from training program to training program depending on arrangements with the institution granting the credit.

ONGOING ASSESSMENT AS PART OF TRAINING

"At first it's a little frightening to be assessed. . . Having other people observe you. Wondering if they're seeing about you what you feel about yourself. It helps to know that they're not there to put you down but to help you improve."

Diana Margalis.

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Assessment is usually a somewhat formal or structured measure or inventory of a trainee's knowledge, skills and attitudes in relationship to the CDA competencies.

In most training programs, assessment occurs informally as an ongoing aspect of training. The most common procedures for informal assessments are on-the-job observations and conferences. Interviews, check lists of competencies, journals or diaries, and video taping are used.

Ongoing assessment enables a trainee to contribute to the direction of his/her own learning. It helps a trainee understand strengths and discover the areas in which additional knowledge and skill are needed.

Most training programs collect information which shows a trainee's progress in acquiring the CDA competencies. Sometimes this is done in the form of a profile which documents ability to perform specific tasks related to the CDA role. The profile is included in a portfolio which contains information about the knowledge and skills which a trainee has acquired and those on which work is still needed. This same procedure is followed when a trainee applies to the CDA Consortium for a formal assessment for the CDA credential.

Generally, informal assessment involves an ongoing process of interaction between a trainee and the CDA field trainer. If for example, the trainee works in the same center as the CDA trainer, or the trainer visits often, assessment is usually frequent, unstructured and informal. There may also be a series of more formal assessments involving an initial self-appraisal, classroom visits, assessment conferences, and a preliminary formal assessment to be ready for final assessment by the CDA Consortium.

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4. THE CDA CREDENTIAL

"For me, I'd be in the training program if there wasn't a CDA credential. But, I'd like to have the credential to confirm my own judgment that I've changed. I've become more competent."

Lucille Rissler.

"The important thing about the credential is that it goes with you. I could move to California and say, 'This is what I am.' I'm a Child Development Associate. It sets a level of expectation."

Sally Aber.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The CDA Consortium, an organization representing approximately 40 associations involved in the field of child development, has developed a formal assessment system that is based on the CDA competencies. The Consortium will award the credential to individual candidates who apply and are assessed by them as competent CDA's. Projection for the adoption of such an award system is scheduled for Spring 1975.

When trainees feel ready to be assessed, they will be able to follow procedures for applying for the CDA credential. This procedure will be ready after the CDA assessment and credentialing systems have been approved by the Consortium Board of Directors. (This is projected for Spring 1975.) At present, these are the basic features of the formal assessment procedure:

The trainee and trainer will agree on readiness for the final assessment by the Consortium.

Assessment will involve the candidate and several other people in a group called the Local Assessment Team (LAT).

Assessment will take place over a period of time.

The assessment will be done on the job when the candidate is working with children.

Information about the candidate's competence will be collected in a portfolio, which will be available to the candidate at all times.

Assessment will be friendly and helpful. It will point up areas in which the candidate excels, as well as areas in which improvement is needed.

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A PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIAL

The CDA credential differs from other certification systems in that it is to be granted by a national Consortium as a professional credential. It is hoped that the CDA credential will soon be recognized in all states as a basis for issuing state credentials or licenses to practice.

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5. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT CDA TRAINING

"To get the most out of CDA training, it has to be an individual thing. Whatever you don't know, wherever you aren't as competent, you need to ask for help. There's no pressure. Everyone does it at their own pace. But you have to look at yourself—at your strengths and weaknesses."

Susan Olejars.

WHAT IS THE TRAINEE'S ROLE IN THE PROGRAM?

A CDA trainee is in a dual role—as a student and as a teacher. It is important that trainees see themselves as active learners collaborating with the CDA training staff to improve their professional skills.

HOW CAN TRAINEES GET THE MOST OUT OF THE PROGRAM?

Play an active role.

Use the knowledge and skills of the CDA staff—ask to be observed, ask for feedback.

Ask questions.

Don't hesitate to suggest ideas or changes in the program.

Use the training program as an opportunity to take the initiative on your job. For example, try out a new idea, or ask to plan the schedule for a day or week.

Share what you're learning with other trainees and with the staff at the center where you work.

Set goals for yourself and plan how to meet them.

Check on your progress as you go along. Keep a journal or diary.

HOW MUCH TIME IS REQUIRED?

Programs vary as to how much time is required for classes or meetings or other activities. Most programs require some work at home in the evenings or on weekends. Being in the program may be less difficult and time consuming for someone who is continuing to work in a familiar job than for someone who is new to the field.

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Duration of training may be several months to two years or more, depending on a trainee's progress.

HOW MUCH DOES CDA TRAINING COST?

Now there are few, if any, costs to trainees accepted in CDA training programs that are funded by the Office of Child Development. The major anticipated cost in programs not funded by OCD is for tuition. Other costs include books, transportation, and incidental expenses.

ARE TRAINEES ASSURED A CDA CREDENTIAL?

Not necessarily. This judgment is made by the local assessment team at the time of a candidate's assessment. Many current candidates feel that their experiences in the program, and the added confidence they have gained, are worthwhile regardless of whether or not they receive the CDA credential.

HOW WILL CDA TRAINING AFFECT A TRAINEE'S CAREER?

This varies widely depending on personal goals and situation. Current CDA candidates have these career goals:

becoming more competent in working with children;

rethinking career goals and broad career directions within the early childhood profession;

gaining practical experience as a way to enter the profession;

returning to a current job with greater skills to strengthen the program;

obtaining a new job, with greater responsibilities;

obtaining a credential which will provide recognition for competency wherever one moves;

opening a day care center;

pursuing academic degrees in child development and related fields;

becoming "master teachers" or demonstration teachers and helping others learn the CDA competencies.

WHERE IS TRAINING NOW AVAILABLE?

At present CDA training is available in a limited number of places. The Office of Child Development has funded thirteen pilot training programs across the country, and is sup-

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porting CDA training for Head Start staff through the Head Start Supplementary Training (HSST) program which operates in approximately 350 colleges and universities.

HOW DOES ONE ENROLL IN CDA TRAINING?

CDA training is now only available in the places mentioned above where there are openings. It is probable that colleges, junior colleges, day care associations and other training organizations will establish CDA programs in the future.

IS THERE A NEED FOR CDA'S?

There is a growing need for competent child care personnel. Most preschool centers want people on their staffs who are known to be qualified to work with young children. Like any other training program, however, the CDA Program helps a trainee become more competent but cannot guarantee a particular job or promotion.

The CDA credential is expected to become a nationally recognized professional credential. The Office of Child Development and the CDA Consortium are working toward this goal.

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6. APPENDIX

A. AN INTRODUCTORY GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THIS GUIDE

The terms defined below occur frequently in this guide. The definitions present their meaning in the context of the CDA Program.

ACADEMIC TRAINING

Academic experiences provide some of the knowledge needed to acquire the CDA competencies. This can be formal courses, seminars, workshops, discussion groups, learning modules, and independent study.

ASSESSMENT

An inventory, measurement or description of a person's knowledge, skills, and attitudes in relation to the CDA competencies. In CDA training programs, assessment is an ongoing and often informal part of training. A formal assessment using the assessment system developed by the CDA Consortium is a prerequisite for receiving the CDA credential.

ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

A combination of methods for arriving at an assessment of a person's competence, e.g., classroom observation, pencil-and-paper tests, personal interviews. This information is compiled in a portfolio for each CDA candidate.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE, or CDA

A person knowledgeable about preschool children and capable of providing developmental and educational experiences for them. A CDA has been credentialed by the CDA Consortium to assume responsibility for young children in group settings in a developmental early childhood program.

CDA CANDIDATE

A person who applies to the CDA Consortium for a formal assessment leading to the CDA credential. For people in CDA training programs, a decision regarding when to apply should involve both the person and the CDA training program staff.

CDA COMPETENCIES

The CDA competencies are an operational definition of what should occur in a developmental

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child care program. They are based on widely acknowledged assumptions about children's developmental needs and what behaviors staff should manifest to foster children's growth and learning. As such, the competencies are the substantive foundation for the training, assessing and credentialing of Child Development Associates.

CDA CONSORTIUM

The CDA Consortium is a private, nonprofit corporation of over 40 national organizations interested in the development and education of young children, organized to develop a competency-based assessment and credentialing system for early childhood staff.

CDA CREDENTIAL

The CDA credential will be awarded by the CDA Consortium to CDA candidates who are assessed as competent CDA's as a result of a formal assessment procedure. It is a national professional credential which will be backed by the CDA Consortium. The CDA Consortium and the Office of Child Development are working with the states to gain recognition of the CDA credential in state licensing practices.

CDA TRAINEE

A person enrolled in a CDA training program.

CDA TRAINER

A staff member of a CDA training program.

COMPETENCE

Observable behavior illustrating that a person has the knowledge, skills, and attitudes associated with the CDA's role as the primary person responsible for a group of young children in a developmental child care program.

COMPETENCY

A single element or skill necessary for overall performance as a CDA but not in itself total competence.

COMPETENCY AREAS

Clusters of competencies which together are essential to adequate performance of the CDA's role. There are six competency areas outlined in the CDA competencies.

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COMPETENCY BASED

A system either for training or assessment and credentialing which requires the observable performance of specified tasks. CDA training, assessment, and credentialing are based on the CDA competencies.

FIELD TRAINING, or ON-THE-JOB EXPERIENCES

Experiences which take place in the center where a CDA trainee works or is placed for field experiences. They are designed to help the trainee acquire the CDA competencies.

INDIVIDUALIZED TRAINING

Integrated academic and field experiences based on an individual's strengths and weaknesses with respect to the CDA competencies. Individualized training can take place in a one-to-one or group setting—the key feature is relating training to individuals' needs.

MODULES AND MINI-COURSES

Short learning experiences focused on some aspect of a CDA's role which can be done independently or in a group, and can involve reading, discussion, viewing a film or demonstration, and some kind of action project or assignment related to the subject being studied.

VIDEO TAPING

Recording behavior on video/television tape so that it can be replayed and observed.

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B. THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE COMPETENCIES

A comprehensive, developmental program for preschool children is one in which the total design helps children acquire the basic competencies and skills for full development and social participation, while at the same time assuring that the quality of the child's experience is emotionally satisfying, personally meaningful, and provides a basis for future learning.

Within such a child development program the Child Development Associate will be expected to have knowledge and skill in the following six competency areas:

Setting Up and Maintaining a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment

Organize space into functional areas recognizable by the children, e.g., block building, library, dramatic play, etc.

Maintain a planned arrangement for furniture, equipment and materials, for large and small motor skills learning, and for play materials that is understandable to the children.

Organize the classroom so that it is possible for the children to be appropriately responsible for care of belongings and materials.

Arrange the setting to allow for active movement as well as quiet engagement.

Take preventive measures against hazards to physical safety.

Keep light, air and heat conditions at best possible levels.

Establish a planned sequence of active and quiet periods, of balanced indoor and outdoor activities.

Provide for flexibility of planned arrangement of space and schedule to adjust to special circumstances and needs of a particular group of children or make use of special educational opportunities.

Recognize unusual behavior or symptoms which may indicate a need for health care.

Advancing Physical and Intellectual Competence

Use the kind of materials, activities and experience that encourage exploring, experimenting, questioning, that help children fulfill curiosity, gain mastery, and progress toward higher levels of achievement.

Recognize and provide for the young child's basic impulses to explore the physical environment; master the problems that require skillful body coordination.

Increase knowledge of things in their world by stimulating observation and providing for manipulative-constructive activities.

Use a variety of techniques for advancing language comprehension and usage in an atmosphere that encourages free verbal communication among children and between children and adults.

Work gradually toward recognition of the symbols for designating words and numbers.

Promote cognitive power by stimulating children to organize their experience (as it occurs incidentally or pre-planned for them) in terms of relationships and conceptual dimensions; classes of objects; similarities and differences; comparative size, amount, degree; orientation in time and space; growth and decay; origins; family kinship; causality.

Provide varied opportunities for children's active participation, independent choices, experimentation and problem-solving within the context of a structured, organized setting and program.

Balance unstructured materials such as paint, clay, blocks with structured materials that require specific procedures and skills; balance the use of techniques that invite exploration and independent discovery with techniques that demonstrate and instruct.

Stimulate focused activities: observing, attending, initiating, carrying through, raising questions, seeking answers and solutions for the real problems that are encountered and reviewing the outcomes of experience.

Support expressive activities by providing a variety of creative art media, and allowing children freedom to symbolize in their own terms without imposition of standards of realistic representation.

Utilize, support and develop the play impulse, in its various symbolic, and dramatic forms, as an essential component of the program; giving time, space, necessary materials and guidance in accord with its importance for deepening and clarifying thought and feeling in early childhood.

Building Positive Self-Concept and Individual Strength

Provide an environment of acceptance in which the child can grow toward a sense of positive identity as a boy/girl, as a member of his/her family and ethnic group, as a competent individual with a place in the child community.

Give direct, realistic affirmation to the child's advancing skills, growing initiative and responsibility, increasing capacity for adaptation, and emerging interest in cooperation, in terms of the child's actual behavior.

Demonstrate acceptance to the child by including his home language functionally in the group setting and helping him to use it as a bridge to another language for the sake of extended communication.

Deal with individual differences in children's style and pace of learning and in the social-emotional aspects of their life situation by adjusting the teacher-child relationship to

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individual needs by using a variety of teaching methods and by maintaining flexible, progressive expectations.

Recognize when behavior reflects emotional conflicts around trust, possession, separation, rivalry, etc., and adapt the program of experiences, teacher-child and child-child relationships so as both to give support and to enlarge the capacity to face these problems realistically.

Be able to assess special needs of individual children and call in specialist help where necessary.

Keep a balance for the individual child between tasks and experiences from which he can enjoy feelings of mastery and success and those other tasks and experiences which are a suitable and stimulating challenge to him, yet not likely to lead to discouraging failure.

Assess levels of accomplishment for the individual child against the background of norms of attainment for a developmental stage, taking into careful consideration his individual strengths and weaknesses and considering opportunities he has or has not had for learning and development.

Organizing and Sustaining the Positive Functioning of Children and Adults in a Group in a Learning Environment

Plan the program of activities for the children to include opportunities for playing and working together and sharing experiences and responsibilities with adults in a spirit of enjoyment as well as for the sake of social development.

Create an atmosphere through example and attitude where it is natural and acceptable to express feelings, both positive and negative—love, sympathy, enthusiasm, pain, frustration, loneliness or anger.

Establish a reasonable system of limits, rules and regulations to be understood, honored and protected by both children and adults, appropriate to the stage of development.

Foster acceptance and appreciation of cultural variety by children and adults as an enrichment of personal experience; develop projects that utilize cultural variation in the family population as resource for the educational program.

Bringing About Optimal Coordination of Home and Center Child-Rearing Practices and Expectations

Incorporate important elements of the cultural backgrounds of the families served; food, language, music, holidays, etc., into the children's program in order to offer them continuity between home and center settings at this early stage of development.

Establish relationships with parents that facilitate the free flow of information about their children's lives inside and outside the center.

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Communicate and interact with parents toward the goal of understanding and considering the priorities of their values for their children.

Perceive each child as a member of his particular family and work with his family to resolve disagreements between the family's life style with children and the center's handling of child behavior and images of good education.

Recognize and utilize the strengths and talents of parents as they may contribute to the development of their own children and give parents every possible opportunity to participate and enrich the group program.

Carrying Out Supplementary Responsibilities Related to the Children's Programs

Make observations on the growth and development of individual children and changes in group behavior, formally or informally, verbally or in writing, and share this information with other staff involved in the program.

Engage with other staff in cooperative planning activities such as schedule or program changes indicated as necessary to meet particular needs of a given group of children or incorporation of new knowledge or techniques as these become available in the general field of early childhood education.

Be aware of management functions such as ordering of supplies and equipment, scheduling of staff time (helpers, volunteers, parent participants), monitoring food and transportation services, safeguarding health and safety and transmit needs for efficient functioning to the responsible staff member or consultant.

PERSONAL CAPACITIES ESSENTIAL FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATES

In addition to the knowledge and experience that are essential components of educational competencies, it is essential that the people who teach young children have specific capacities for relating to them effectively. From field observation of practitioners and a review of the literature, it is possible to name those qualities and capacities which are likely to be most congruent with the competencies as defined. These are essential complements to the more technical aspects of competence. The capacities listed below represent patterns of relatedness most relevant to teaching children in the early years of childhood.

to be sensitive to children's feelings and the qualities of young thinking

to be ready to listen to children in order to understand their meanings

to utilize non-verbal forms and to adapt adult verbal language and style in order to maximize communication with the children

to be able to protect orderliness without sacrificing spontaneity and child-like exuberance

to be perceptive of individuality and make positive use of individual differences within the child group

to be able to exercise control without being threatening

to be emotionally responsive, taking pleasure in children's successes, and being supportive for their troubles and failures

to bring humor and imaginativeness into the group situation

to feel committed to maximizing the child's and his family's strengths and potentials.

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